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PROFILES & TRENDS

## Study Looks at how and why Americans Diet

YESTERDAY

By TGR Edit Desk



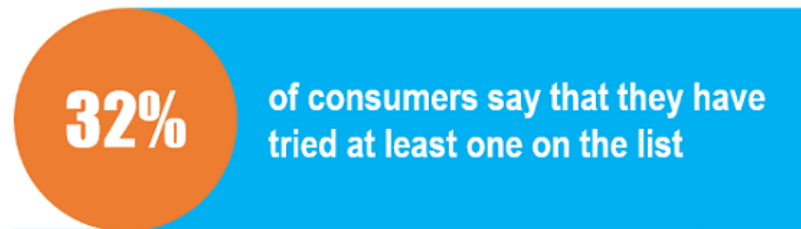
*Hartman Group examines modern eating ideologies*

Contemporary Americans face a decision few have had to make throughout history: how to rationalize eating for pleasure with eating for longevity.

According to The Hartman Group, the way Americans think about and understand nutrition and their bodies is changing. Part of the major shifts in the food and beverage market is the emergence of new, more nuanced health and wellness goals within the everyday American diet and mainstream consumers who are hungry for guidance and direction. Hard-core wellness consumers focus on the specifics of nutrient density and customized diets to maximize energy, performance and digestion.

Nearly every consumer today has some kind of dieting ideology (or system

**APPROACHES TO EATING TRIED IN THE PAST YEAR**



|                    |    |                               |    |
|--------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|
| Vegetarian         | 9% | NutriSystem                   | 4% |
| Dairy/Lactose-free | 7% | Paleo diet                    | 3% |
| Gluten-free        | 7% | South Beach diet              | 3% |
| Weight Watchers    | 6% | Religious dietary restriction | 3% |

of ideas and ideals) that they currently practice. Whether vegetarian, Paleo, flexitarian or gluten-free, American eating habits today are much more nutritionally intentional than in a former era composed largely of short-term crash diets, silver-bullet products and eating to "look good."

|                        |    | restriction                |    |
|------------------------|----|----------------------------|----|
| Juice cleanse or detox | 6% | Flexitarian                | 3% |
| Vegan                  | 5% | Prepared meal subscription | 2% |
| Seek raw/living foods  | 4% | Jenny Craig                | 2% |
| Atkins diet            | 4% | Locavore                   | 1% |

Source, Health & Wellness 2015 report, The Hartman Group

Contemporary diets are personalized and all about balance, wellness and energy. Wellness and energy are shorthand for feeling lighter, better digestion, reducing inflammation and ultimately feeling good and being happy.

The Hartman Group's Health and Wellness 2015 report finds that about one-third (32 percent) of adults have tried various approaches to eating and dieting in the past year, ranging from vegetarian (9 percent) to Paleo (3 percent) to locavore (1 percent).

Consumers move in and out of different diet approaches to manage their eating and address their current needs. While some regard periodic diet switching as a matter of trial and error, others prefer flexibility and rotate through part-time diets that may include spurts

of fasting, detox cleanses or “going vegan” for a certain number of days. Millennials are the most open to trying different eating ideologies: more than four in 10 (44 percent) say they have tried a new approach in the past year.

Plant-based and Paleo-focused diets are two modern approaches progressive consumers utilize to stack the nutritional deck for optimal results on a daily basis. Whether Paleo- or plant-based, each dieting ideology has successes and each path differs. Ultimately such eating styles are about wellness and human performance. Some of the key objectives consumers aspire to when choosing whether to eat plant-based or Paleo include:

- Redefining what is tasty and considering "flavor per calorie"
- Choosing overall “vegetable-driven” plates
- Eliminating excessive processing in foods and beverages
- Eating and drinking to avoid inflammation
- Seeking gut-friendly nutrition
- Eating more good fats

### **The Insight**

Many of the nutritionally driven diets popular today (e.g., Paleo, plant-based, gluten-free, vegetarian) signal new consumer appreciation and curiosity about ingredients formerly vilified (e.g.,

"fat") as well as entire categories of products (e.g., vegetarian, natural sweeteners).

Active health and wellness consumers, for example, are keen on good fat and are stocking up on lard from natural food co-ops, rendering their own duck fat and eating fries cooked in chicken fat at hip eateries like Seattle's Damn the Weather.

"Fructose-free" may be a new callout as fructose is being linked to hormone disruption, elevated triglycerides and elevated blood sugar by progressive health and wellness consumers. Such consumers believe there's a possible connection between artificial sweeteners and potential increased health risks, which has some rethinking the benefits of "sugar-free." Instead, active health and wellness consumers are opting for unsweetened, minimally sweetened with real sugar and natural alternatives (e.g., stevia and monk fruit).

Staying conversant with dieting trends will no doubt have payoffs down the road since many of the dieting behaviors embraced by active health and wellness consumers are diffusing into the mainstream.

Trend-focused and quick-to-act marketers know that opportunities abound for innovative private label products at retail. Meatless

products from Wegmans and Target reflect fun and flavor compared with the asceticism of traditional meatless products. In branded food and beverage CPG, many emerging and popular new brands are reading the tea leaves of dieting trends and are developing products that are plant-based, nutritionally dense, vegetarian or digestion friendly.

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